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Coyotes in the Southwest: Dedication to Samuel L. Beasom

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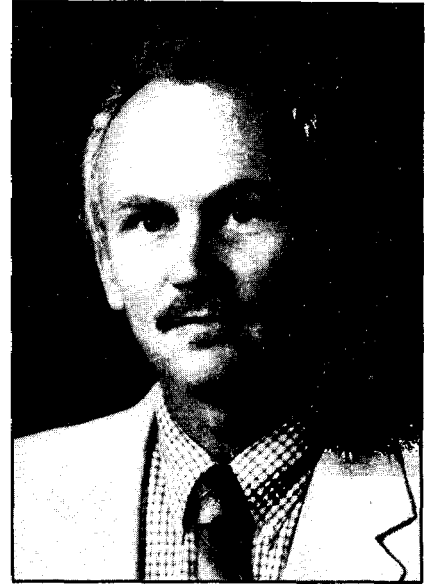
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DEDICATION

Samuel L. Beasom
1945-1995

This symposium is dedicated to the life, achievements and memory of Samuel L. Beasom. From the first time that I considered trying to assemble this symposium, Sam Beasom was on my list of key people to include. Sam's professional contributions and his dry wit would surely play a pivotal role in a conference on coyotes in the Southwest, especially one to be conducted in Texas. I never dreamed then that his contributions, and subsequent recognition, would be presented posthumously here today.

Sam was a native of San Antonio and spent most of his professional career in South Texas. After completing his B.S. in Wildlife Biology at Texas A&M University, Sam earned his M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Although conferred in Wisconsin, Sam's research was conducted on the King Ranch studying the ecology of Rio Grande wild turkeys. After serving a stint with the U.S. Army, Sam returned to Texas A&M and completed his Doctorate. Sam went on to hold positions with Texas A&M University, New Mexico Game and Fish Department, U.S. Forest Service and finally as Director of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Kingsville.



I first met Sam while pursuing my Doctorate at Texas Tech University in 1980. Sam served on my graduate committee, and it was then that he gave me subliminal instruction in critical thinking. I can still see him shrugging his shoulders and wrinkling his forehead when someone would confront him with some wildlife-related dogma. "Could be" or "I dunno" he'd say, his expressions intimating that the jury was still out as far as he was concerned. Sam was coyote-like in his basic distrust of the most obvious and seemingly impervious wildlife paradigms. Peering into his Paul Newman-blue eyes, one could see that the wheels were always turning. "Trust everybody, but cut the cards" would have been a fitting creed for Sam.

Sam was as much an icon for predator research, especially coyote research, as anyone in Texas. His 1974 article on the effects of short-term predator removal and its subsequent effects on white-tailed deer productivity was (and continues to be) a benchmark study relative to deer X coyote interactions. Sam coupled a critical eye with an on-the-ground ability to communicate with his colleagues at the time, be they ranchers, Ph.D.'s or front-line trappers. Besides coyotes, he also enhanced our collective knowledge of white-tailed and mule deer, pronghorns, wild turkeys and scaled quail. He was well-published and served a tour of duty as Editor of the Journal of Wildlife Management from 1985-87.

Sam may be gone, but he leaves a legacy among Texas wildlifers. He was recognized as the Outstanding Wildlife Professional by his peers in the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society in 1987. I see many of his traits in his former graduate students, some of whom will be on the program here today. Somewhere in my files I have Sam's questions that he challenged me with during my final comprehensive exams at Tech. Short questions, but questions that forced you to challenge dogma and synthesize bits of knowledge that came from both the book and the back forty. He had a knack for confronting your conclusions without threatening your intelligence. I am a better wildlife professional today because of Sam Beasom; perhaps you are too.

Trust everybody, but cut the cards.

-- Dale Rollins
Symposium Coordinator